

EXCERPTS FROM "AN UNDELIVERED
AND UNORTHODOX ADDRESS" *

Perhaps no part of the homeopathic system is so objectionable as that of degrading the administration of medicine to a mere sweetmeat business. Every medicine is administered in sugar, and much of it is kept prepared in form of globules or comfits—so that it is common for the children of homeopathic patients to ask for medicine as a treat, and not one of them is ever conscious of taking anything unpleasant—much less nauseous. I am not aware that they ever give emetics or cathartics—but I am of the opinion that they do not. Moreover their patients are scarcely ever conscious of any painful, nauseous or uncomfortable sensations from the medicines which they take; which is proof positive that what they take is of no use. Their pretended cures, I most positively believe, are effected by Nature—while their medicines, I hesitate not to affirm, are mere placebos—that is, pleasant trifles. Indeed, the sight of one of their medicine cases is enough to convince you that they are a petty, paltry set of peddling pretenders. "*Homunculi, non homines*," manikins, not men.

I suppose you are aware that they abjure bleeding, cupping, leeching, scarifying, setoning, issuing, causticing, blistering and every other kind of mechanical or chemical lesion of the body; and you may know by this, if by nothing else, the utter uselessness of their system. Indeed it has nothing to recommend it; it is the imbecile offspring of the thirtieth dilution of a fanatic. The homeopaths, as a body, are beneath our notice, and below contempt. As a system we may say of it, "*nihil sed nominis umbra*." It is nothing but the shadow of a name. Euclid's definition of a point is the best description of it: "Without length, breadth or thickness." A mere nonentity.

Now let me give you a brief sketch of our system of medicine. We are men of substance; what we give hath length, breadth and thickness. Our *Materia Medica* cannot be carried in our pockets. We give teacupfuls of salts and senna—sometimes even to children—none of your con-

*The original carries the following subtitle: The third anniversary oration for the New York Academy of Medicine, which was not delivered before that remarkable body, but ought to have been, at their annual meeting, held in the chapel of the University, November 14th, 1849 by the physician who was not elected for that occasion. . . .

temptible fantastical comfits and globules! tablespoonfuls of castor oil—teaspoonfuls of jalap and calomel—tartar emetic and ipecacuanha in becoming quantities to vomit them—scammony, colocynth, aloes, gamboge, etc., in respectable doses to purge them. The effects of these things are felt and lasting. I assure you I have often known patients to be a week or more ere they recovered from one of such doses. Compare that with your homeopathsists' thirtieth trituration—and then answer the question—"Who are most entitled to the appellation of practitioners of medicine?" I verily believe that I give more medicine in one week, than some of them give in a whole year! Why, if we were all homeopathsists, the drug trade would be ruined, and the tariff seriously injured. I would enlist your political and patriotic feelings against such an atomic cachectic monstrosity.

Then for the mode of preparing and exhibiting their medicines. They have their everlasting powders and perpetual drops. "*Toujours la même chose.*" See our variety! We have our powders, pills, boluses, suppositories, draughts, mixtures, lotions, liniments, ointments, plasters, injections, collyriums, troches, embrocations, fomentations, cataplasms, sinapisms, vesications, pustulations and cauterizations! "*Non verba sola, sed substantia rerum.*" Real things, not merely names. These are *our* medicamenta, our *Materia Medica*.

Let me now call your attention to what we *do*, as well as what we *give*. We believe in bleeding, and practice it with a generous freedom. It is one of the essential features of our system. How could inflammations and inflammatory fevers be subdued without it? In many instances of inflammation of the lungs, liver, brain, and bowels, we are often obliged to bleed persons almost to death, in order to avert the terrible consequences of the rapid and fearful disease! What are we to think of the philosophy of a system of therapeutics which abjures bleeding? Many of our patients have a periodical instinctive sense of the necessity of the lancet—and if we were to decline to use it for them, they would certainly apply to less skillful and conscientious persons. Moreover, we should lose many fees, and those of the best kind—ready money. Many of us are entirely supplied with pocket money from this source, and from that of snipping tongue-tied children. It is well for us, that the homeopathsists do not profess to know much about the anatomy of the body, healthy or morbid, or they would convince the people that nine tongue-tied cases in ten do not need snipping.

Again, look at our superior advantages in the relief which we are able to offer by local blood-letting—by cupping, scarifying, and leeching. Some of our patients, even delicate women, have been cupped almost from head to foot. In many cases of apoplexy, paralysis, epilepsy, and spinal disease, the established mode of treatment is topical blood-letting. How, I ask, could we proceed, without these modes of effecting our purpose? Where the homeopathsists would give a millionth of a grain of calcareum, aconite, or veratrine, we extract six ounces of blood! Our system is physical, sensible, impressive, indelible! We leave the marks of science behind us, at every step! Their system is fantastical, metaphysical. They leave neither trail nor trace of their operations. Their patients are not conscious of any, inwardly or outwardly. The candy and comfit dealers might as well be accounted physicians, as the homeopathsists! They are a sort of medical Brahmins or Fakirs.

I have scarcely time and opportunity to do justice to that part of our system, consisting of setons, issues, blisterings, sinapisms and pustulations. Of these things, so exceedingly effective in their mode of operation, and so admirably adaptive in their administration—the homeopathsists know nothing. While we employ some hundreds of thousands of blisters annually, they do not use a single one. I am sure that I need not enlarge upon this subject, to so enlightened, so experienced, and I dare say I may add, so well blistered and pustuled an audience, as the present. How the homeopathsists sleep in their beds, when they have cases of inflammation under their care, and they neither bleed, cup, nor blister, I know not; except their consciences have been as much diluted by fanaticism, as their intellects have been triturated with mysticism.

For my part, never until I have abstracted the last ounce of blood by some one of our modes of depleting, and obtained the last drachm of serum by some form of vesication, do I feel at ease, in cases of inflammation. Oh, what a comfort to my soul it is, when I pay my last visit to my dying patients, that no congested blood in their veins can cry to Heaven against me for vengeance!

Dixon, Edward H.: *Back-Bone*. New York, DeWitt, 1866, pp. 94-97.